

Placement options for children displaced by Hurricane Katrina arriving in Wisconsin without an adult caregiver

I. Purpose

The purpose of this briefing paper is to present placement and licensing considerations for children who are victims of Hurricane Katrina and arrive in Wisconsin without a responsible adult to care for them.

II. Program Description

“Foster care,” as defined in s. 48.62(1)(a), Stats., means any facility operated by a person required to be licensed in which care and maintenance are provided for no more than 4 foster children or, if necessary to keep siblings together, for no more than 6 foster children.

Foster homes and treatment foster homes are subject to licensing requirements as established in Ch. HFS 56, Adm. Code, and Ch. HFS 38, Adm. Code, respectively. The intent of foster care is to provide a temporary and safe place for a child until the child can be safely reunified with his or her family or placed in an alternative permanent placement including, but not limited to, kinship care, adoption, or guardianship.

III. Options for placement of children without a responsible adult

A. Fast track licensing

This option includes placement of children in unlicensed homes for 30 days, as currently allowed by statute, with the possibility of an additional 30 day extension (if this is a temporary physical custody placement as opposed to a dispositional placement) for the licensing agency to fully complete all current licensing requirements.

B. Abridged licensing requirements (provisional or conditional licensing)

This option would involve granting exceptions to current licensing requirements to facilitate the emergency placement of the child. Such exceptions would not normally be granted in most typical foster care placement situations. Exceptions would not be granted to the requirements related to the collection and analysis of essential pieces of information needed to assure that a child would be placed in a safe environment, including criminal background check, home visit, and basic assessment information, to be gathered within 72 hours. All licensing requirements would need to be met within 60 days, unless an exception is granted for documented reasons as is currently the case with most foster home licensing situations.

C. Use of group homes or large placement resources

This option includes placing children into group homes, shelter care facilities, or residential care centers until they can be evaluated and foster families can be located or fully licensed.

Placement options for children displaced by Hurricane Katrina arriving in Wisconsin without an adult caregiver

D. Use existing foster and treatment foster care providers

This option includes using existing resources of public, private, and tribal agencies statewide to provide placement resources in family environments.

If you do not have available placement resources in your county to place evacuee children or if you have placement resources to share with other counties, please contact Judie Hermann in the Bureau of Programs and Policies at 608/261-8084 or hermajj@dhfs.state.wi.us.

E. Use licensed respite resources or recently retired foster parents.

With this option, agencies would need to contact their licensed respite resources and foster parents who have recently resigned or retired and request their assistance to care for children affected by the hurricane.

IV. Protocol for referring prospective foster parents to care for children displaced by Hurricane Katrina

Any adult who contacts DCFS with an interest in becoming a foster parent for a child displaced by Hurricane Katrina will be referred to their county of residence for more information about licensing requirements. The county Foster Care Coordinator will be provided with contact information for the prospective foster family.